

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-07
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 3670

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, KU
SUBJECT: CONTINUED KUWAITI INTEREST IN US SELF-PROPELLED
HOWITZERS

REF: (A) 76 STATE 63992, (B) KUWAIT 1577, (C) STATE 61041

1. DURING MY JUNE 27 CALL ON KUWAIT ARMED FORCES COS,
GENERAL MUBARAK (SEPTTEL), HE EXPRESSED CONTINUED STRONG
INTEREST IN THE ACQUISITION OF US M109 SELF-PROPELLED 155MM
HOWITZERS, FRANKLY NOTING THAT HE WAS "UNDER PRESSURE"
TO MAKE A DEAL TO ACQUIRE MODERN ARTILLERY TO SUPPORT
KUWAITI LAND FORCES. HE AGAIN MENTIONED THAT HE WOULD
PREFER TO BUY AMERICAN AND IDENTIFIED THE LONG DELIVERY
TIME AS THE REASON WHY THE GOK HAD NOT PURSUED THIS MATTER MORE
ACTIVELY WITH US RECENTLY. HE INDICATED THAT KUWAIT WOULD SHORTLY
SHOP
ELSEWHERE IF THE US WERE NOT ABLE TO MAKE A BETTER OFFER.
I REPLIED THAT I THOUGHT THE USG POSITION ON AVAILABILITY
AND DELIVERY TIME FOR THE HOWITZERS WAS FIRM (AS I
PREVIOUSLY EXPLAINED TO DEFMIN (REF B) AND AS GENERAL
MUBARAK HAD HEARD FROM CHUSLOK). I ALSO NOTED THAT
IN THE MEANWHILE, THE US HAD DEVELOPED A NEW ARMS EXPORT
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POLICY, AND I WAS NOT CERTAIN WHAT EFFECT IT WOULD HAVE
ON THIS REQUEST. NEVERTHELESS, HE EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS
TO OBTAIN ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS FOR
GENERAL MUBARAK:

- A. IS THE MARCH 1976 USG DECISION IN PRINCIPLE TO
SELL SP HOWITZERS TO KUWAIT (REF A) STILL VALID?
- B. IS IT POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN DELIVERY OF SUCH WEAPONS

EALIER THAN OR DOES THE DELIVERY TIME NOTED IN REF. C
STILL APPLY?

2. IF THE ANSWER TO A IS POSITIVE AND TO B NEGATIVE, I PLAN
TO ADVISE THE KUWAITIS THAT THE DECISION IS FINAL AND THAT
THE EMBASSY WILL NOT RELAY FURTHER REQUESTS FOR AN EARLIER DELIVERY.

3. WHILE IT DID NOT SPECIFICALLY RECOMMEND THE ACQUISITION
OF FIELD ARTILLERY, THE 1972 DOD SURVEY OF THE DEFENSE REQUIRE-
MENTS FOR KUWAIT DID CONCLUDE THAT THE KUWAIT ARMED FORCES
SHOULD BE PROVIDED WITH THE BEST AVAILABLE EQUIPMENT
CONSISTENT WITH ITS CAPABILITIES TO PERFORM ITS MISSION.
IT IS OBVIOUS THAT, TO GENERAL
MUBARAK'S THINKING, THE M109 HOWITZER IS THE BEST IN THE
WORLD. HE PREFERS THIS HOWITZER TO EITHER THE FRENCH OR
BRITISH EQUIVALENTS. HIS REQUEST FOR THIS WEAPON DERIVES
FROM A GOK PLAN TO BUILD A MODERN DIVISION ARTILLERY TO SUPPORT
ITS THREE INFANTRY BRIGADES. THE CURRENT ORGANIZATION
CONSISTS OF ONE FRENCH (AMX) 155 HOWITZER BATTALION,
ONE 120MM MORTAR BATTALION, AND ONE BATTALION CONSISTING OF
OBSOLETE BRITISH 25 POUNDER GUNS. THE ACQUISITION OF THE
TWO M109 BATTALIONS WILL ENABLE THE GOK TO ELIMINATE
THE MORTAR AND GUN BATTALIONS, BUILDING A DIVISION ARTILLERY
CONSISTING OF THREE 155MM HOWITZER BATTALIONS. CHUSLOK
ADVISES ME THAT, FROM A MILITARY POINT OF VIEW, THIS MAKES
GOOD SENSE.
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4. AS INDICATED, THE KUWAITI AREMD FORCES HAVE A HIGH REGARD
FOR THE US 155 SP HOWITZER AND WOULD PREFER TO INCLUDE
IT IN THEIR DEFNSIVE ARSENAL. HOWEVER, THEY ARE CONCERNED
WITH THE LONG LEAD TIME OF FIVE YEARS TO OBTAIN THIS WEAPON
WHICH THEY WOULD NOT BE IN A POSITION TO USE EFFECTIVELY
FOR ANOTHER FEW YEARS AFTER THAT BECAUSE OF TRAINING TIME
INVOLVED. SINCE THE ACQUISITION OF SUCH ARTILLERY WOULD
SEEM TO BE A BASIC REEQUIREMENT FOR KUWAIT'S DEFENSE, OUR
INABILITY OR UNWILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE AT LEAST A FEW
BATTERIS AND TRAINING WITHIN AN EARLIER TIMEFRAME THAN
FIVE YEARS WILL NOT MEAN THAT THE KUWAITIS WILL DO WITHOUT
THIS TYPE OF WEAPON, BUT THAT THEY WILL GO ELSEWHERE TO
OBTAIN IT. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE KUWAITIS HAVE HAD FOR A YEAR
OR MORE AN OFFER FROM THE FRENCH TO PROVIDE A SIMILAR WEAPON
BUT THE FORMER HAVE HELD OFF PURCHASE NEGOTIATIONS BECUASE OF
PREFERENCE FOR THE US WEAPON.

5. SINCE I BELIEVE THE GOK REQUEST IS REASONABLE AND
SINCE US UNWILLINGNESS TO SUPPLY THESE HOWITZERS WOULD NOT
REDUCE THE LEVEL OF ARMAMENTS IN THE AREA, I RECOMMEND THAT
THE DEPT. GIVE CONSIDERATION TO AUTHORIZING THE PROVISION OF

A SMALL NUMBER OF HOWITZERS, E.G. ONE COMPLETE BATTERY (6 HOWITZERS), WITH WHICH KUWAITIS COULD BEGIN TRAINING, WITH THE DELIVERY OF THE REMAINDER IN FIVE YEARS' TIME. PLEASE ADVISE.

6. GENERAL MUBARAK AGAIN RAISED THE AVAILABIITY OF ICM M449 AND ECM M483 AMMUNCITION (REF C). I TOLD HIM THESE WERE UNAVAILABLE ON POLICY GROUNDS. MAESTRONE

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